Research Activity Panel Meeting Summary

Gregor M. Cailliet, MLML, RAP Chair

NOVEMBER RAP MEETING

Host: University of California at Santa Cruz/Seymour Center
Friday November 17, 2000 9 - Noon
Attendance: 15 RAP members and 7 guests

PRESENTATIONS

Current Facilities & Development at Long Marine Lab (Steve Davenport)

Steve went through the various facilities existing, in construction, and planned for the future at the Long Marine Laboratory site. Existing are the Younger Lagoon Reserve, original Long Marine Lab buildings, Marine Wildlife and Veterinary Care Center, Site for Oiled Seabird Research Center, and Seymour Marine Discovery Center. Almost completed is the new NMFS building (former Tiburon Laboratory). Under construction is the Center for Ocean Health, which is scheduled to be finished March, 2001. During the next two years, UCSC will be compiling a new development plan, to include teaching facilities and possibly housing for faculty and students..

Update on the ATOC Program (Dan Costa)

Dan reviewed the history of the ATOC research, both as it related to measuring ocean temperatures using acoustics and the marine mammal impact research. The site for the ATOC sound source is on Pioneer Seamount 50 miles offshore from San Francisco (and barely out of the MBNMS sanctuary boundary). This location, and another in Kauai, were set up for a two-year feasibility study of the ATOC concept and a recent paper in Science demonstrated it worked to measure average ocean temperatures over a long distance. The project is now over in California.

The work that Dan and his colleagues did was stimulated because the source could not be operated unless marine mammal research was done to evaluate the impact. The cable and generation station were to be removed, but the possibility exists for it to remain for listening work only. The questions the marine mammal researchers asked were: who's there, will they hear it, and will they react (and, if they do, even a behavioral change could be considered a marine mammal "take")? The various studies made significant contributions to understanding general distribution (spatial and seasonal) and abundance of species, as well as photo identification. The really exciting results came from extensive (and very expensive) elephant seal tracking, showing that these animals moved far and wide and could even provide oceanographic data. The visual observations and statistical analysis of them did not demonstrate much of an effect of the sound source. There were some subtle changes, however, in that sperm whales tended to clump a bit more when the sound source was on, and humpback whales appeared to veer ~ 1 km away from the source. Also demonstrated were dramatic changes in elephant seal behavior when a ship passed over.

DISCUSSION

Sanctuary Integrated Monitoring Network (SIMoN: Mario Tamburri)

Mario provided an ovrview of SIMoN, which was familiar to the RAP from e-mail messages. The major focus is how human changes might impact environment. One RAP member indicated that more socio economic research should be included. However, the RAP was unanimous in that SIMoN was a very useful exercise and that the concept strongly deserved support, both from NOAA/NOS and beyond. They appointed a committee including Greg Cailliet, Steve Moore, and Dan Costa to write a letter of support for SIMoN to Sanctuary Superintendent Bill Douros.

Marine Protected Area Science Center (Charlie Wahle)

Charlie made a presentation about Marine Protected Area Network Initiative by President Clinton in May, 2000 and the new Marine Protected Area Science Center which was recently dedicated and to be placed within the new NMFS building at Long Marine Laboratory. He is working on putting together a staff for this center and working on the major scientific questions that need be answered before there are many management crises. It was noted that this Center and its objectives provide a nice match with SIMoN. It is obvious that the value of marine protected areas for research and monitoring on living and cultural resources is growing and has attracted a great deal of interest worldwide (see Ocean Conference Proceedings, National Academy of Sciences Report, etc.). Because this is a relatively new tool, the science needed to know how and where to design protected areas is important, especially as they effect management strategies at the local, regional and national levels.

There are four components to the MPA Initiative: 1) to form a Federal Advisory Committee (a national level stakeholder advisory committee to the Commerce and Interior Secretaries); 2) to comprehensively inventory existing marine protected areas nationwide; 3) to construct and operate a public web site on MPAs (mpa.gov); and 4) to establish an MPA Science Center, which will help identify threats and resources, and encourage interagency partnerships to support MPAs. Locally, the MPA Science Center will also help the MBNMS manage our site. Ultimately, they will develop priority themes and hopefully find funds and the means to address them.

MBNMS Research Plan Revision (Andrew DeVogelaere)

Andrew indicated it was time to revise the original research plan that the RAP produced early on. A committee of Dan Costa, Mario Tamburri, Gary Sharp, Ross Clark, and Charlie Wahle was formed to inititiate work on this. Everyone will be send workshop results, a list of critical issues, and a vision document, so that this process can help contribute to the management plan revision.

COMPASS (Chris Harrold and George Leonard)

Because of time constraints, George presented a brief overview of COMPASS. This organization will make a more comprehensive presentation at the next RAP meeting.

Workshop on Electronic Tagging of Pacific Ocean Pelagics (Dan Costa)

Dan Costa provided an overview of a recent workshop at the Monterey Bay Aquarium and Hopkins Marine Station that covered electronic tagging of pelagic organisms in the Pacific, a

pilot project of the Census of Marine Organisms. Approximately 80 participants worked for two days to provide a list of organisms to target in addition to the key species, the bluefin tuna and northern elephant seal. The main objective is to use modern technology, test it in the sea, and ultimately find out the distribution and abundance patterns of many important pelagic species of cephalopods, sharks, other fishes, turtles, birds, and mammals.

Ricketts Lecture and Research Award for Sanctuary Currents 2001

Andrew De Vogelaere summarized the names submitted to date, requested complete nominations and will compile them and send them out for an electronic vote by the RAP in the next few weeks.

RAP Meeting Schedule for 2001 (Andrew De Vogelaere)

The preliminary schedule of meetings in 2001 and their locations was reviewed.

Following adjournment, Churchill Grimes took several RAP members on a tour of the almost completed, new NMFS Lab on the Long Marine Laboratory site.